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ABSTRACT

Interactional behaviors for 15 moderately and severely handicapped elementary and preschool students were observed for approximately 1 month across a variety of settings. Behaviors were classified along a continuum of adaptive behaviors, and their proposed "degree of adaptation" was compared to commonly used definitions of adaptive behavior and scales such as the American Association of Mental Deficiency Adaptive Behavior Scales. Results suggested that constructs such as social competence and social skill may be more closely related to preferred long term goals for these students and that shaping procedures may need to be undertaken to assist with generalization of behaviors to social situations. Results further suggested that level of adaptive behavior may be related to situational content as well as setting requirements and reinforcement. (Author/CL)

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ADAPTIVE VERSUS APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR: INFORMAL AND FORMAL ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

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Adaptive Versus Appropriate Behavior: Informal and Formal Assessment and Implications for Instruction

Interactional behaviors for moderately and severely handicapped, elementary and preschool students were observed over about a month time span across a variety of settings. These behaviors were classified along a continuum of adaptive behaviors, and their proposed "degree of adaptation" was compared to commonly used definitions of adaptive behavior and scales such as the AAMD Adaptive Behavior Scales. The results suggested that constructs such as social competence and social skill may be more closely related to preferred long term goals for these students and that shaping procedures may need to be undertaken to assist with generalization of behaviors to social situations.The results further suggested that level of adaptive behavior may be related to situational content as well as setting requirements and reinforcement.

Grossman (1977) has defined adaptive behavior as:

> the effectiveness or degree with which an individual meets the standards of personal independence and social responsibility expected for age and cultural group (p. 11).

In evaluating the adaptiveness of an individual's behaviors, such scales as the A.A.M.D. Adaptive Behavior Scale (Nihira, Foster, Shellhaas, and Leland, 1974) have traditionally been utilized. However, as the item presented in Figure 1 indicates, such scales may not provide the specific detail needed to assist in programming for the development of social skills. Gresham (1981), in a review of social skills training, has implied that social validity (or the usefulness of particular skills as assessed by those in the person's environment), social skill (emitting behaviors which are reinforced and inhibiting behaviors which are punished or extinguished), and social skills deficits, performance deficits and self control deficits are related concepts which may need to be explored to develop adequate social skills with handicapped students. Social competence (the ability to "maximize the probability of producing, maintaining, or enhancing positive effects for the interactor", Foster and Richey, 1979, p. 626), appears to also be a component of such behaviors.

Insert Fig. 1 about here

Gresham (1981) has further emphasized some concerns related to present practices in evaluating and changing social skills, inclu-

Item #33

Preverbal expression

nods head or smiles to express happiness ____
indicates hunger ____
indicates wants by pointing or vocal noise ___
chuckles or laughs when happy ____
expresses pleasure or anger by vocal noises ___
says a few words

Fig. 1 Example of item from the A.A.M.D. Adaptive Behavior Scales (Nihira, Foster, Shellhaas and Leland, 1974, p. 6). The example portrays the difficulty with using the scale to program for adaptive behavior. For example, if the student only nodded head or smiled to express happiness, then a more complex skill may also need to be taught. However, the programmer would not proceed to teach the next task on the list, indicating hunger. Additionally the examiner would not proceed to teach the next item, #34, articulation.

ding:

1. Lack of adequate theory regarding which social skills are most critical and their subsequent impact on interpersonal relationships

2. Failure to demonstrate which social skills in which settings result in predictable effects

3. Lack of data on generalization and maintenance of trained social skills

4. Need to evaluate the interactional effects between type of technique and type of handicapped child.

In attempting to isolate specific social responses and classify them as adaptive or nonadaptive, it is necessary to also examine related social behaviors. Aberrant behaviors or "any behavior which is perceived to be clinically abnormal because of the response topography, response frequency or the situation in which the response occurs"(Gaylord-Ross, 1980,p. 135) can interfere with instruction and the development of appropriate social skills, especially if the aberrant responses are being reinforced. If appropriate, but non-adaptive, behaviors are being reinforced, environmental expectations may be such that the more adaptive behaviors will likewise not be displayed. Herein appropriate behaviors are defined as:

> behaviors which do not interfere with the dictates of the particular environment.

For example, it may be appropriate for a student to wait quietly for the teacher to give instructions regarding the next activity; however, if the student rarely initiates interactions, it may be nonadaptive (from a long term perspective) to continue to structure the situation

so that the student always waits for teacher instruction and never needs to initiate interactions or make decisions regarding time usuage and initiating activities. Students who continue to wait for teacher instruction may be displaying a deficit behavior which will result in a lack of long-term social competence. Matson and Andrasik (1982), in a related study concerning social competence of deinstitutionalized retarded adults, evaluated the appropriate and inappropriate interactions of seven individuals preparing for deinstitutionalization. Multiple-baseline procedures were used to measure the effects of three treatment procedures. A combination of social skills training, self-monitoring and/or social skills training and self-monitoring and self-reinforcement was reported to be more effective than any of the techniques used in isolation. Numerous other studies have also supported the use of a variety of behavior modification procedures in changing the social behaviors of handicapped persons (Stokes, Baer and Jackson, 1974; Koegel and Rincover, 1976; Allyon and Rosenblum, 1977).

In order to evaluate the concerns presented by Gresham (1981), the present investigation was designed as a two-phase procedure: Phase 1, prelimenary refinement of important social-interactional skills assessment, and Phase 2, specific interventions for behaviors identified in Phase 1. This report covers Phase 1 of the investigation.

In addition to the definitions already presented, the terms adaptive, inappropriate-adaptive, and appropriate-adaptive have been operationally defined to assist with data collection and analysis:

Adaptive behaviors: behaviors which facilitate an individual achieving skills needed in order for the individual to acquire coping skills and/or meet his/her needs, emotions or desires (or obtain the desired reinforcement), (O'Connell-Mason, 1982, p. 4). Adaptive behaviors are viewed not as static behaviors but as a continuum of behaviors which represent dynamic goals.

Inappropriate-adaptive behaviors. Adaptive behaviors which interfere with the dictates of the environment, but which secure the reinforcement for the individual nonetheless. (For example, tantrumming to avoid an activity). These behaviors are often escape or avoidance responses.

Appropriate-adaptive behaviors. Adaptive behaviors which produce no conflict with the dictates of the particular environment; i.e, appropriate behaviors which assist with the acquisition of socially valid social and coping skills.

METHOD

Subjects

Fifteen subjects were selected, some randomly and some designated by teachers, from five classrooms of moderately and severely handicapped students in two elementary schools in Billings, Montana. The subjects included 11 males, and four females, ranging in age from three to nine years. All of the subjects had been identified as severely handicapped, autistic, language delayed or educable mentally retarded by the school's identification system, including, among other tests, the WISC-R. All subjects were ambulatory with limited or no verbal behavior.

Settings

The observations were conducted in classrooms and on the school playground during normally scheduled activities. The classrooms contained desks or tables, freeplay areas and group instruction areas. Observations took place during free time, structured and unstructured outdoor activities, snacks,art, and language -- all instances in which social interaction with peers and teachers could be observed and was appropriate.

Procedures

Experimental Design. The present data and discussion represent the prelimenary refinement of the research topic and observations of behaviors across settings. No interventions were implemented during this phase of the research.

Selection of classroom and students. A request was forwarded to the school district for permission to observe, provide feedback to teachers at the end of the observational period, and perhaps intervene at a later date for the purpose of examining appropriate and adaptive behaviors in three sites representing preschool, elementary, and secondary aged moderately to severely handicapped persons. Teachers were contacted and a very brief discussion of the intent (to observe social behaviors for the refinement of a hypothesis about interactional problems) resulted. All contacted teachers agreed to participate. Unfortunately, the researcher's time constraints has delayed observation in a secondary setting.

In some cases, teachers selected particular students for whom they desired further data on social interactions. Eight of the fifteen students were teacher-selected, the other seven were randomly chosen by the observer.

Measurement Procedures

Three basic formats were utilized for data collection: a modified version of the Parten's level of social interaction checklist (Parten, 1932); a modification of the teacher-pupil interaction observation (O'Connell, 1976) and continuous event recording.

In all instances the observer sat or stood unobtrusively at a distance of at least four feet from the student being observed. Interactions between the students and observer were rare and

were discouraged through such procedures as attention to note taking and avoidance of eye contact. Each observation session lasted 3-5 minutes. The number of students, number of teachers, number of aides, and the ongoing activities were recorded at the top of each form.

The Parten's scale. Figure 2 contains the checklist used to measure autistic, unoccupied, independent, observing, parallel, associated, attempted, and cooperative interactions according to the Parten's scale (see the figure for definitions). Additionally, the observer also recorded the locus of interaction: Initiating (I), Responding (R), Recognition of Appropriate behaviors for the Environment (RE), Sustaining (S) and Terminating (T). A sequence of activities was noted by numbering the order in which the behaviors occurred. Teacher consequences and comments were also recorded. A separate form was used for each five minute observation session.

O'Connell's Teacher Pupil Interaction Observation. In some instances interactions were very brief and difficult to record with the Parten's scale, therefore the O'Connell interaction observation was also utilized. Figure 3 contains the modification of this form utilized in the present study. The accompanying manual has specified directions for use and the definitions of interactional behaviors. Basically, this form utilizes 10 sec. interval recording, with observations made during the first 5 sec. and recording during the last 5 sec. of the interval. With this

modified scale, the frequency of each behavior within Parten's levels of social interaction was coded in relationship to: 1) the sequence of occurrence and 2) the type of teacher consequence (neutral, positive, negative, question, direction, etc.) for each 10 sec. interval. Observations were made for three to five minutes.

Insert Fig. 2 & 3 about here

Continuous event recording. The final procedure was to record a brief narrative description of ongoing interactions between the student and others, listing antecedent and consequent behaviors. To assist with later data analysis, the observer attempted to identify responses which could fit the experimental definition of "appropriate but not adaptive" during these observation periods. These behaviors were underlined. The behavior hypothesized (by the observer) to be more adaptive was noted in parentheses immediately after the specific underlined behavior. Continuous event observations lasted three to five minutes.

RESULTS

Fig. 4 and 5 contain summaries of the data obtained from this prelimenary research. Fig. 4 includes the percentage of behaviors observed for each individual according to Parten's levels of behaviors. In cases in which the continuous event recording was utilized, data were later summarized according to Parten's system, providing a procedure to compare all of the data obtained. Essentially the data indicate that for the fifteen students: 1) autistic level

MODIFIED PARTEN'S OBSERVATION FORM

Date _____ Observer _____ Class _____
Classroom Activity _____ Student Activity _____
Time in _____ Time Out _____

SOCIAL LEVEL	ANTECEDENTS	BEHAVIORS	CONSEQUENCES	COMMENTS
AUTISTIC (little or no awareness of others or environment; self-stimulation).		RE I R S T		
UNOCCUPIED (aware of environment, but no attempt to interact with with it; sits, walks aimlessly, observes others from a distance).		RE I R S T		
INDEPENDENT (plays with toys or objects, in isolation).		RE I R S T		
OBSERVING LEVEL (child approaches others and observes; no attempts to become involved; sustained observation)		RE I R S T		
ATTEMPTED INTERACTION (attempts to engage in same activity as others, occupies same space, vocalizes to get attention of others; includes hitting, pushing).		RE I R S T		
PARALLEL INTERACTION (plays independently, closer to others; may use same toys)		RE I R S T		
ASSOCIATIVE INTERACTION (child plays with others, activity doesn't require participation; borrowing/lending toys, doing same activity		RE I R S T		
COOPERATIVE INTERACTION (interacts with others in activity requiring mutual interaction; plays ball, plays on swing together, etc.).		RE I R S T		

Fig. 2 Parten's levels of interaction. The form has been modified to include information on antecent and consequent events and the type of behavior (see discussion in methods).

Date _____ Observing _____
Time _____
School _____ #Students _____
Teacher _____ #Aids _____
Observer _____ Level _____

TEACHER-PUPIL OBSERVATION FORM

Teacher/Aide Behaviors
Positive + Irrelevant Talking T
Negative - Modeling M
No Response• Counting C
Instruction/ Neutral Response N

min.	CHILD	I-Indiv. G Group TASK	Autistic/ Unoccupied 1 2 3 4 5 6	Independent/ Observing 1 2 3 4 5 6	Attempted Interaction 1 2 3 4 5 6	Parallel Interact 1 2 3 4 5 6	Assoc. Interact 1 2 3 4 5 6	Cooperative Interaction 1 2 3 4 5 6
1		I G						
2		I G						
3		I G						
4		I G						
5		I G						
6		I G						

Fig.3 A portion of the O'Connell Teacher Pupil Observation, modified to measure Parten's levels of responding. The actual form has space for 25 minutes of observation. Teacher/Aide Behaviors that are consequences to student behavior are recorded under each 10 sec. interval using the above code.

behaviors ranged from 0-34% with a median of 0; unoccupied responses ranged from 0 - 21%, median 0; independent responses ranged from 0- 60%, median 0; observing responses ranged from 0- 100%, median 25%; attempted responses ranged from 0 - 35%, median 0; parallel responses ranged from 0 - 83%, median 0; associative responses ranged from 0 - 70%, median 21%, and cooperative responses ranged from 0 - 100%, median 0. Responses according to setting indicated that autistic level behaviors tended to be highest during language, with a median of 11% during that activity. The highest median score of "observing" also was obtained during language, with a median of 45%. The median associated response during language was 8% ; the median cooperative response was 2.6%.

During outdoor activities the highest percentage of classified responding was obtained for associated responses, with a median of 43.5%. Attempted interactions during outdoor activities occured at a median 10.5%

Fewer snack, art and play activities were observed; however the data indicate high observing and associated response levels during play and the two children observed during snack engaged in a high level of cooperative behavior; although, at least 75% of the cooperative verbalizations were inappropriate for one child.

An analysis of the data according to age levels indicated a higher level of attempted and associated responses for the elementary students (Students J,C,K,A and P) than for the preschoolers. Observ-

ing responses were generally the most frequently recorded responses for the preschool children. An analysis by type of handicapping condition was not plausible due to the fact that all preschoolers had been diagnosed as language delayed . Those individuals identified as having autistic tendencies (Subjects K,A, and P) did not demonstrate higher levels of autistic behaviors than some of the other subjects, although these three students exhibited the only autistic behaviors observed in the elementary aged population. Four of the five females displayed associative interactions more frequently than other behaviors; the fifth female engaged in more cooperative behaviors than the other behaviors being measured. Observing or associative interactions were the two categories of behavior reported most frequently for the males observed in this study. An analysis of the data by classrooms did not establish any clear patterns.

Insert Fig. 4 & 5 about here

Figure 5 contains a description of the nonadaptive behaviors noted most frequently. The behaviors are presented in a continuum from lower level to higher level adaptive behaviors.

DISCUSSION

The prelimenary observations suggest that, in preschool and elementary settings, moderately and severely handicapped individuals engage in behaviors which may be appropriate in that they do not "disrupt the dictates of the immediate situation", but which are not as adaptive as other behaviors in the individual's behavior

STUDENT/ SETTING	% RESPONSES ACCORDING TO PARTEN'S LEVELS							
	AUTISTIC	UNOCCUPIED	INDEPENDENT	OBSERVING	ATTEMPTED	PARALLEL	ASSOCIAT.	COOPERATIVE
J. A					16%	83%		
C. O		11%			11%		44%	33%
*K. O,L	12.5%,34%	6%,0	6%,0	34%,0	6%,16%		43%,8%	
*A. O,A	10%,0		0,60%		10%,20%		70%,20%	
*P. O,L	0%,11%	21%,0	21%,0	7%,44%	35%,0		7%, 38%	7%,0
*R. P			4%	39%	8%		47%	
*S. P			3%	25%		7%	44%	19%
B. S,S						0,25%		100%, 75%**
D. P,L				95%,100%			5%,0%	
*M. S,S	10%,0			30%,0				60%,100%
N. L	30%			3.8%			37%	7.4%
T. L	3%			73%			13%	
*O. L				46%			46%	7.6%
*P. L	11%		7.9%	58%			21%	2.6%
L. L	25%							75%

* Students identified by teacher

** Episode recording indicated 100% cooperative interaction with 54% appropriate verbalization and 46% inappropriate verbalizations in session 1; during session 2, of the 75% cooperative interactions, 37.5 % were inappropriate verbalizations and 37.5% were appropriate verbalizations. All inappropriate verbalizations indicated either answering questions for others and or irrelevant content. Two sessions were recorded for some students.

Settings: A = art, O = outside, L = language, P = freeplay (inside), S = snack

Fig.4 Summary of data according to Parten's levels of interaction (Parten, 1932).

LOWER LEVEL BEHAVIOR →	TARGETED BEHAVIOR →	HIGHER LEVEL ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR
observes teacher from a distance, no attempt to approach	physically approaches Teacher and stands	approach teacher and initiate conversation
responds to teacher, does not initiate interactions	constantly seeking teacher attention; through verbalizing	initiates interactions with peers; reduces frequency with teacher
no eye contact, no talking	talks without eye contact	eye contact and talking
no speech	slurred speech	correct speech
little speech	talks: irrelevant content	relevant conversational skills
does not attend to others	attends to others; does not answer questions	attempts to answer questions
no question answering	answers questions directed to others	waits turn
Behaviors which could require primarily extinction tactics:		
no hand use, no awareness of hands	sterotypic hand behaviors	appropriate hand use &/or extinguish and teach or require incompatible behaviors
no awareness of others	staring at others	eye contact with task or others according to functionality &/or extinguish
isolate play	aggressive interactions with peers	cooperative peer interaction &/or extinguish

Fig. 5 Continuum of adaptive behaviors for targeted responses, Phase I.

repetoire (as indicated by the results in Fig. 4 and 5). Additionally, some settings may be more conducive to higher levels of social interaction than others as structured in the special education classrooms observed in this study. A part of the reason for the occurrence of such appropriate but nonadaptive behaviors may reflect curricula being utilized which rely on the A.A.M.D., or other, adaptive behavior scales. Such scales consider age appropriateness of behaviors and the ability of an individual to cope with his/her environment through static rather than dynamic measures. Such static measures often suggest a "level of functioning" rather than indicate the instructional procedures needed to shape a person's behavior and to assist with the development of more adaptive behaviors. Recent discussions of social competence and intelligence, (Foster and Ritchy, 1979; Greenspan, 1979; Reschler, 1981) may more nearly approach the concept of adaptive behavior which reflects the ongoing refinement of adaptation to environment. The basic rule utilized in shaping, "the successive steps to the final behavior are reinforced according to increasing rigorous criterion" (Herbert, 1981, p. 105) appears not to be employed in some social settings. The principle of shaping suggests the need to structure environments and contingencies so that skills which have been observed in structured contexts (establishing eye contact, using verbal skills, working independently) can be expected during teacher-pupil and pupil-pupil interactions.

The shaping procedures suggested by the current study require

the establishment of a continuum of acceptable-adaptive behaviors and discrimination training so that individuals engage in appropriate-adaptive and not merely situationally appropriate behaviors. The literature strongly supports the use of such principles in isolated research studies for a variety of behaviors (Happer and Wambold, 1976; Kazdin and Erickson, 1975; Wehmann, Karan, and Rettie, 1976; Stokes, Baer and Jackson, 1974). The efficácy of shaping adaptive behaviors, instead of reinforcing appropriate-nonadaptive behaviors, will be further defined as more research is conducted, with specific interventions for specific behaviors. Phase two of this project is intended to investigate the use of shaping for the systematic development of adaptive behaviors along a social skills continuum which will provide for skill demonstration in a variety of settings.

Results from the present phase of the investigation must be viewed as prelimenary; however, such variables as the type of task, length of session, task requirements and difficulty level for the individual child, and amount of teacher imposed structure may all affect the level of social competence or adaptivity observed for the individual child. For example, during the language session more of the autistic behaviors occurred towards the end of the five minute interval, suggesting that length of attending to such a session may need to be gradually increased for some students. Further data, recorded with interobserver reliability conditions and videotaped observer training sessions, will be obtained

as a part of this ongoing research. Such data, and the planned data for secondary students and post-school adults in other environments, should assist with the refinement of hypotheses and the development of theory regarding the impact of various social skills on interpersonal relationships across settings. Such data will also assist with establishing an ecological baseline of acceptable levels of various social skills under varying conditions.

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